

Two weeks ago the House wrapped up its work for the 1st session of the 111th Congress. While I have taken exception with many pieces of controversial legislation this year, I was most concerned by the final vote of the session; a vote to increase this Nation's debt limit by \$290 billion to a total limit of \$12.39 trillion. This is the fifth time since 2007 the majority has voted to rack up our Nation's credit card. However, this is an issue which has gone on for far too long, and blame for this rests on both sides of the aisle.

Some argue that an increase is necessary, but if we made the same hard choices here in Congress that American families are making at their kitchen tables and balanced our budget, we wouldn't be here today. Simply passing the buck onto our children and grandchildren is unacceptable.

It's high time we not only balance our budget, but run a surplus and use those dollars to begin paying off this debt. I've already taken action to cosponsor legislation to place our country on a responsible fiscal path.

First, I've cosponsored H.J.Res.1, introduced by Rep. Bob Goodlatte of Virginia which would amend the Constitution to make it a rule that we balance our budget. This would ensure that no excuses are made when it comes to our budgeting and we will be required to make the hard decisions that we've put off for far too long.

Next, I've also cosponsored HR 1557, the SAFE Commission Act introduced by Reps. Jim Cooper and John Tanner of Tennessee, along with Rep. Frank Wolf of Virginia. This legislation would establish the Securing America's Future Economy (SAFE) Commission to develop legislation designed to address our currently unsustainable imbalance between our long-term federal spending commitments and our projected revenues. It is this imbalance that creates the current record deficits.

We must recognize that America's budgeting system is broken and in the current environment cannot lead to a responsible long-term federal budget. The commission would address placing an emphasis on pro-growth tax reform that does not raise taxes and limiting the growth of entitlement programs. It would also address the implications of foreign ownership of federally issued debt by the Federal Reserve and the U.S. Treasury. Finally, it would recommend revisions to the budget process that place greater emphasis on federal deficit reduction.

There's an old saying that, "When you're in a hole, its time to stop digging". That's why I will continue to be an advocate of applying the principles and values of American families when it comes to crafting this Nation's budgets; doing anything less is simply irresponsible.

Congressman Rob Wittman represents the First District of Virginia. He was elected to his first full term in November 2008 and serves on the Natural Resources Committee and the Armed Services Committee where he is the Ranking Member of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee.